
DDRT EMPLOYEE WORKS WITH RED CROSS

By Marilou R. Nelson, DDRT Information Assistant

When there is a disaster in any part of the United States or the world—The American Red Cross is there within a short period of time. It is amazing sometimes how quickly the Red Cross swings into action and just how much good they do when they can do—when they are in place.

One of Defense Distribution Center Red River (DDRT) employees—Joan Bland—knows just how all this activity work. She is a Disaster Services Human Resources (DSHR) Team Member for the Texarkana Chapter of the American Red Cross.

“I am a Disaster Services Human Resources (DSHR) Team Member, Captain of the Local Disaster Action Red Team, Local Disaster Volunteer Texarkana Area Chapter, National Disaster Volunteer and Damage Assessment Team Member. I have attended numerous training sessions with the American Red Cross and taken courses which include: Emergency Assistance to Families, Shelter Operations, Standard First Aid, Emergency Response Vehicle Driver Workshop, Public Affairs in Disasters, Adult CPR, Survey Damage Assessment, Disaster Service Course and Serving the Diverse Community,” Joan explained.

Joan has been a member of the Texarkana Chapter of the American Red Cross for three years.

“On December 25 (2000), an ice storm hit Bowie and Miller counties and the surrounding counties in Texas and Arkansas—causing power outages for thousand of residents. I was notified by the American Red Cross Disaster Resource Coordinator George Tucker to report in to the Chapter office, located at 821 Spruce Street, Texarkana, Texas,” she said.

“My major duties consisted of Mass Care, which is mobile feeding on the Emergency Relief Vehicle (ERV). We fed thousands of people twice a day. I also assisted in the shelters that were set up in the area and with other duties as needed. There were numerous National Disaster Services Human Resources team members who came from different places throughout the country.

They were from Dallas, Austin, Corpus Christi, Houston, Abilene, Fort Worth, Beaumont, San Antonio, Waco, San Angelo, Texas, and St Louis, Missouri. These workers all come to assist in the disaster stricken area,” she explained.

The Texarkana Area Red Cross Chapter serves eight (8) counties in Texas: Bowie, Red River, Miller, Cass, Marion, Franklin, Morris, Titus. They also serve the local fire departments when called.

Joan finally returned to work at DDRT on January 8, 2001, but she continued to work with the Red Cross in the evenings, serving meals during that time.

“During this ice storm disaster, the American Red Cross provided meals for over 87,500 people and sheltered more than 25,000 people. This type work is a very hard job, but well worth it. Because I love helping people,” she said.

“Nedra Turney, the Executive Director of the Texarkana Chapter of the American Red Cross, and her assistant, Audrey Norwood, are very good bosses to work for. They have helped me tremendously in learning my job. The local chapter of the American Red Cross provided the best training,” Joan explained.

The food for this area during the disaster was prepared by the East Texas Baptist Disaster Relief Association and Tarrant County, Texas Disaster Relief Association.

The ice storm which hit Christmas Day in the Texarkana area was devastating and very hard on many families. Many households were without electricity and phone service for a week or more. Many homes were damaged and downed power lines and debris was left on roads, streets and yards.

It is amazing just what a Red Cross Disaster Team can do when “called out” and “put into action” in the time of need. The Red Cross does “wonderful” work, but most of this work could not be done without the volunteers like DDRT employee — Joan Bland. We appreciate all the volunteer workers in this area and especially one of our own.